
PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
AFRICAN ASSOCIATION.

Wm. J. ...



ADMIRALTY

North Inland 147. f. 9

PROCEEDINGS

OF

THE ASSOCIATION

FOR

PROMOTING THE DISCOVERY

OF THE

INTERIOR PARTS

OF

AFRICA.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY W. BULMER AND CO.

Shakspeare Printing-Office.

1792.



CHAPTER XIII.

SINCE the publication of the Proceedings of the Society for promoting the Discovery of the Interior Regions of Africa, two years have elapsed ; and in that period their committee has received, through the medium of distinct and unconnected channels, new and interesting intelligence.

An account which an Arab, of the name of Shabeni, had given them of an empire on the banks of the Niger, excited their early attention ; for he said that the population of Houssa, its capital, where he resided two years, was equalled only (so far as his knowledge extended) by that of London and Cairo : and, in his rude unlettered way, he described the government as monarchical, yet not unlimited ; its justice as severe, but directed by written laws ; and the rights of landed property as guarded by the insti-

tution of certain hereditary officers, whose functions appear to be similar to those of the Canongoes of Hindostan, and whose important and complicated duties imply an unusual degree of civilization and refinement.

For the probity of their merchants, he expressed the highest respect; but remarked, with indignation, that the women were admitted to society, and that the honour of the husband was often insecure.

Of their written alphabet he knew no more than that it was perfectly different from the Arabic and the Hebrew characters; but he described the art of writing as common in Houssa. And when he acted the manner in which their pottery is made, he gave, unknowingly to himself, a representation of the ancient Grecian wheel.

In passing to Houssa from Tombuctoo, in which last city he resided seven years, he found the banks of the Niger more numerously peopled than those of the Nile from Alexandria to Cairo; and his mind was obviously impressed with higher ideas of the wealth and grandeur of the empire of Houssa, than of those of any kingdom he had seen, England alone excepted.

The existence of the city of Houssa, and of the empire thus described by Shabeni, was strongly confirmed by the letters which the committee received from his majesty's consuls at Tunis and Morocco, and with this additional circumstance of information from them, that both at Tunis and Morocco the eunuchs of the seraglio were brought from the city of Houssa.

Anxious to investigate the truth of these accounts ; and impatient to explore the origin and course of a river that might possibly open to Britain a commercial passage to rich and populous nations, the committee embraced the proposals which the ardour of a new missionary offered to their acceptance.—For Major Houghton, who was formerly a captain in the 69th regiment, and in the year 1779 had acted under General Rooke as fort major, in the island of Goree, expressed his willingness to undertake the execution of a plan which he heard they had formed, of penetrating to the Niger by the way of the Gambia.

His instructions, accordingly, were to ascertain the course, and, if possible, the rise and termination of that mysterious river ; and after visiting the cities of Tombuctoo and Houssa, to return by the way of the Desert, or

by any other route which the circumstances of his situation at the time should recommend to his choice.

Having left England on the 16th of October, 1790, he arrived at the entrance of the Gambia on the 10th of November, and was kindly received by the king of Barra, who remembered the visit which the Major had formerly paid to him from the island of Goree; and who now, in return for a small present of the value of 20*l.* cheerfully tendered protection and assistance, as far as his dominion or influence extended.

An offer from the master of an English vessel employed in the trade of the river, enabled the Major, and the interpreter he had engaged on the coast, to proceed to Junkiconda: where he purchased from the natives a horse and five asses, and prepared to pass with the merchandise which constituted his travelling fund, to Medina, the capital of the small kingdom of Woolli.

Fortunately for him, a few words accidentally dropped by a negro woman, in the Munding language, of which he had hastily acquired a superficial knowledge, excited suspicions of danger; and gave him intimations of a conspi-

racy which the negro mistresses of the traders, who feared that the Major's expedition portended the ruin of their commerce, had formed against his life. Afraid, therefore, of travelling by the customary route, he availed himself of the opportunity which the dry season and the tide of ebb afforded of swimming his horse and his asses across the stream; and having, by that means, avoided the parties who were sent for his destruction, he proceeded with much difficulty on the southern side of the river, to that district of Cantor which is opposite to the kingdom of Woolli. There he repassed the Gambia, and sent a messenger to inform the king of his arrival, and to request a guard for his protection.

An escort, commanded by the king's son, was immediately dispatched; and the Major, whose intended present had been announced, was kindly received, and hospitably entertained at Medina.

The town is situated at the distance of about 900 miles, by water, from the entrance of the Gambia; and the country adjacent abounds in corn and cattle, and, generally speaking, in all things that are requisite for the support, or essential to the comfort of life.—Two different sects of re-

ligion distinguish, rather than divide, the people ; the one is composed of the professors of the Mahomedan faith, who are called Bushreens ; the other, and it is said, the most numerous, consists of those, who, denying the mission of the prophet, avow themselves deists, and from their custom of drinking with freedom the liquors of which he prohibited the use, are denominated Sonikees, or drinking men.

In a letter from Major Houghton to his wife, which a seaman preserved from the wreck of a vessel in which the dispatches to the Society were lost, the Major indulges the reflections that naturally arose from his past and present situations. A bilious fever had attacked him soon after his arrival in the Gambia ; but his health was now unimpaired—a conspiracy had assailed his life ; but the danger was passed—the journey from Junkiconda had exposed him to innumerable hardships ; but he was now in possession of every gratification which the kindness of the king, or the hospitality of the people, could enable him to enjoy. Delighted with the healthiness of the country, the abundance of the game, the security with which he made his excursions on horseback, and above all, with the advantages that would attend the erection of a fort on the salubrious and beautiful hill of Fatetenda, where the Eng-

lish once had a factory, he expresses his earnest hope, that his wife will hereafter accompany him to a place, in which an income of ten pounds a year will support them in affluence; and that she will participate with him in the pleasure of rapidly acquiring that vast wealth which he imagines its commerce will afford.

While, in this manner, he indulged the dream of future prosperity, and with still more ample satisfaction contemplated the eclat of the discoveries for which he was preparing, but in the pursuit of which he was retarded by the absence of the native merchant for whose company he had engaged, he found himself suddenly involved in unexpected and irresistible misfortune. A fire, the progress of which was accelerated by the bamboo roofs of the buildings, consumed with such rapidity the house in which he lived, and with it the greatest part of Medina, that several of the articles of merchandize, to which he trusted for the expences of his journey, were destroyed; and to add to his affliction, his faithless interpreter, who had made an ineffectual attempt on his goods, disappeared with his horse and three of his asses: a trade gun which he had purchased on the river, soon afterwards burst in his hands, and wounded him in the face and arm; and though the hospitable kindness of the

people of the neighbouring town of Barraconda, who cheerfully opened their houses to more than a thousand families whose tenements the flames had consumed, was anxiously exerted for his relief; yet the loss of his goods, and the consequent diminution of his travelling fund, were evils which no kindness could remove.

It was in this situation, that, wearied with the fruitless hope of the return of the native trader, with whom he had contracted for his journey, he resolved to avail himself of the company of another slave merchant, who was lately arrived from the south, and was now on his way to his farm on the frontier of the kingdom of Bambouk. Accordingly, on the evening of the eighth of May, he proceeded by moon-light, and on foot, with his two asses, which the servants of the slave merchant offered to drive with their own, and which carried the wreck of his fortune; and journeying by a north-east course, arrived on the fifth day at the uninhabited frontier which separates the kingdoms of Woolli and Bondou.

He had now passed the former limit of European discovery, and while he remarked, with pleasure, the numerous and extensive population of this unvisited country, he ob-

served, that the long black hair and copper complexion of the inhabitants announce their Arab original. They are a branch of that numerous tribe that, under the appellation of Foolies, have overspread a considerable part of Senegambia; and their religious distinctions are similar to those which prevail in the kingdom of Woolli.

A journey of 150 miles, which was often interrupted by the engagements of his companion, who traded in every town, conducted him to the banks of the Falemé, the southwestern boundary of the kingdom of Bambouk. Its stream was exhausted by the advanced state of the dry season, and its bed exhibited an appearance of slate intermixed with gravel.

Bambouk is inhabited by a nation, whose woolly hair and sable complexions bespeak them of the negro race, but whose character seems to be varied in proportion as the country rises from the plains of its western division to the highlands on the east—Distinguished into sects, like the people of Woolli and Bondou, by the different tenets of Mahomedans and Deists, they are equally at peace with each other, and mutually tolerate the respective opinions they condemn.

Agriculture and pasturage, as in the negro states on the coast of the Atlantic, are their chief occupations ; but the progress which they have made in the manufacturing arts is such as enables them to smelt their iron ore, and to furnish the several instruments of husbandry and war. Cloth of cotton, on the other hand, which in this part of Africa seems to be the universal wear, they appear to weave by a difficult and laborious process ; and to these two circumstances it is probably owing, that with them, the measure of value is not, as on the coast, a bar of iron, but a piece of cloth.

The common vegetable food of the inhabitants appears to consist of rice ; their animal, of beef and mutton. A liquor prepared from fermented honey, supplies the want of wine, and furnishes the means of those festive entertainments that constitute the principal luxury of the court of Bam-bouk.

On the Major's arrival at the banks of the river Falemé, he found that the war which had lately subsisted between the kings of Bondou and Bam-bouk, was terminated by a cession to the former, of the conquests he had made in the low land part of the dominions of the latter ; and that the

king of Bondou had taken up his residence in the territory which he had thus obtained.

The Major hastened to pay his respects to the victorious prince, and to offer a similar present to that which the kings of Barra and Woolli had cheerfully accepted; but to his great disappointment, an ungracious reception, a sullen permission to leave the present, and a stern command to repair to the frontier town from which he came, were followed by an intimation that he should hear again from the king. Accordingly, on the next day, the king's son, accompanied by an armed attendance, entered the house in which the Major had taken up his temporary dwelling, and demanded a sight of all the articles he had brought. From these, the prince selected whatever commodities were best calculated to gratify his avarice, or to please his eye; and, to the Major's extreme disappointment, took from him the blue coat in which he hoped to have made his appearance on the day of his introduction to the sultan of Tombuctoo. Happily, however, a variety of articles were successfully concealed, and others of inferior value were not considered as sufficiently attractive.

The Major now waited with impatience for the performance of the promise which the slave merchant, with whom he had travelled from the Gambia, had made of proceeding with him to Tombuctoo ; but as the merchant was obliged to spend a few days at his rice farm on the banks of the Falemé, the Major accepted an invitation to the hospitality of his roof. There he observed with extreme regret, that the apprehension of a scarcity of grain had alarmed his friend ; and that, dreading the consequence of leaving his family, in so perilous a season, to the chances of the market, he had determined on collecting before his departure, a sufficient supply for their support. This argument for delay was too forcible to be opposed, and therefore the Major resolved to employ the interval in visiting the king of Bambouk, who resided in the town of Ferbanna, on the eastern side of the Serra Coles, or river of gold. Unfortunately, however, by a mistake of his guide, he lost his way in one of the vast woods of the country ; and as the rainy season, which commenced with the new moon on the fourth of July, and was introduced with a westerly wind, was now set in, the ground on which he passed the night was deluged with rain, while all the sky exhibited that continued blaze of lightening which in those

latitudes often accompanies the tornado. Distressed by the fever, which began to assail him, the Major continued his route at the break of day; and waded with difficulty through the river Serra Coles, which was swelled by the floods, and on the banks of which the alligators were basking in the temporary sunshine.

Scarcely had he reached Ferbanna, when his fever rose to a height that rendered him delirious; but the strength of his constitution, and the kindness of the negro family to which his guide had conducted him, surmounted the dangerous disease; and in the friendly reception which was given him by the king of Bambouk, he soon forgot the hardships of his journey. The king informed him, that the losses he had lately sustained in the contest with the armies of Bondou, arose from his having exhausted his ammunition; for as the French traders, who formerly supplied his troops, had abandoned the fort of St. Joseph; and either from the dryness of the last season, or from other causes, had deserted the navigation of the upper part of the Senegal, he had no means of replenishing his stores: whereas, his enemy, the king of Bondou, continued to receive from the English, through the channel of his agents on the Gambia, a constant and adequate supply.

Major Houghton availed himself of the opportunity which this conversation afforded, to suggest to the king, the advantage of encouraging the English to open a trade by the way of his dominions to the populous cities on the banks of the Niger.

Such was the state of the negotiation, when all business was suspended by the arrival of the annual presents of Mead, which the people of Bambouk, at that season of the year, are accustomed to send to their king ; and which are always followed by an intemperate festival of several successive days.

In the interim the Major received, and gladly accepted, the proposal of an old and respectable merchant of Bambouk ; who offered to conduct him on horseback to Tombuctoo, and to attend him back to the Gambia. A premium of 125*l.* to be paid on the Major's return to the British factory at Junkiconda, was fixed by agreement as the merchant's future reward. It was farther determined, that the Major should be furnished with a horse in exchange for his two asses ; and should convert into gold dust, as the most portable fund, the scanty remains of the goods he had brought from Great Britain.

The plan was much approved by the king, to whom the merchant was personally known ; and who gave to the Major at parting, as a mark of his esteem, and a pledge of his future friendship, a present of a purse of gold.

With an account of these preparations the Major closes his dispatch of the 24th of July ; and as the society are informed by a letter from Dr. Laidley, his correspondent on the Gambia, that on the 22d of December no later advices had been received, there seems the strongest reason to believe that the Major descended the eastern hills of Bambouk, and proceeded on his road to Tombuctoo.

From his poverty, which affords but little temptation for plunder, and from the obvious interest of his guide, whose profit depends on the faithful performance of the contract, he derives an assurance of success.

The obstacles he has surmounted, and the dangers he has escaped, appear to have made but little impression on his mind ; a natural intrepidity of character, that seems inaccessible to fear, and an easy flow of constitutional good humour, that even the roughest accidents of life have no power to subdue, have formed him, in a peculiar degree,

for the adventure in which he is engaged ; and such is the darkness of his complexion, that he scarcely differs in appearance from the Moors of Barbary, whose dress in travelling he intended to assume.

His journey from the Gambia to the kingdom of Bambouk, has enlarged the limits of European discovery ; for the intermediate kingdom of Bondou was undescribed by geographers : and the information he has obtained from the king of Bambouk, as well as from the native merchants with whom he conversed, has not only determined the course, and shewn, in a great degree, the origin of the Niger, but has furnished the names of the principal cities erected on its banks ;*—fortunately too, the accounts which he has thus transmitted, are strongly confirmed by the intelligence which his majesty's consul at Tunis has collected from the Barbary merchants, who trade to the cities of Tombuctoo and of Houssa, and whose commercial connexions extend to the highest navigable part of the Niger. Nor is this the only advantage for which the committee are indebted to the public spirit and indefatigable zeal of Consul

* The mistaken ideas which Ben Alli and the Shereef Imhammed entertained respecting the course of the Niger, appear to have arisen from their having judged of the direction of the stream by that of one of its reaches.

Magra ; for the specimens of the vegetable productions of the countries on the south of the Desert, which the acquaintance he has cultivated with the conductors of the caravans, has enabled him to send to the committee, afford a satisfactory proof that the account which their printed narrative, on the authority of the Shereeff Imhammed, has given of several of those productions, is faithful to the objects it describes. And the relation he has transmitted of the routes from Tunis to Ghedesmes, and from thence to Cashna and Tombuctoo, have furnished important materials for elucidating the geography of the Desert.

But though we have now an assurance that the Niger has its rise in a chain of mountains which bound the eastern side of the kingdom of Bambouk, and that it takes its course in a contrary direction from that of the Senegal and the Gambia, which flow on the opposite side of the same ridge, yet the place of its final destination is still unknown ; for whether it reaches the ocean ; or is lost, as several of the rivers of Mount Atlas are, in the immensity of the Desert ; or whether, like the streams of the Caspian, it terminates in a vast inland sea, are questions on which there still hangs an unpenetrated cloud.

D

From a passage in Eschylus in which Prometheus relates to Io the story of her future wanderings, there is reason to believe that some of the ancients imagined the river Niger to be that southern branch of the Egyptian Nile, which others represented as rising in the hills, to which they gave the fanciful name of the Mountains of the Moon. The passage from Eschylus,* as translated by Potter, is expressed in the following words :

- “ ——— Avoid the Arimasbian troops.
 “ ——— Approach them not, but seek
 “ A land far distant, where the tawny race
 “ Dwell near the fountains of the sun, and where
 “ The Nigris pours his dusky waters ; wind
 “ Along his banks till thou shalt reach the fall,
 “ Where, from the mountains with Papyrus crown'd,
 “ The venerable Nile impetuous pours
 “ His headlong torrent ; he shall guide thy steps
 “ To those irriguous plains, whose triple sides
 “ His arms surround ; there have the fates decreed
 “ Thee and thy sons to form the lengthen'd line.”

* ——— φύλαξαι, τόντε μενῶπα στραῖον
 Αριμασπὸν ἱπποδάμον ———

The accounts received by the committee of the probable facility of opening a trade from Great Britain to the various cities of the Niger, encourage a belief that the people of the inland regions of Africa may soon be united with Europe in that great bond of commercial fellowship which the mutual wants and different productions of the other continents of the globe have happily established. Much, undoubtedly, we shall have to communicate, and something we may have to learn : for the merchants of Barbary assert that the people of Houssa have the art of tempering their iron with more than European skill ; and that their files in particular are much superior to those of Great Britain and France.

To what degrees of refinement the unmeasured length of successive generations may have improved their manufactures ; or to what arts, unknown and unimagined in Europe, their ample experience may have given rise, the next dis-

Τάτοις σὺ μὴ πέλαιζε. τηλευρὸν δὲ γῆν
 Ἡξεις κελαινὸν φύλον, οἷ' πρὸς ἡλίε
 Ναίισι πηγαῖς, ἔνθα ποταμὸς Αἰθίοψ.
 Τάτε παρ' ὄχθας ἔρφ', ἕως ἂν ἐξίκη
 Καλασμον, ἔνθα βυβλίνων ὀρῶν ἄπο
 Ἰησι ρεπλὸν Νεῖλος εὐποῖον ῥέος.
 Οὗτός σ' ὁδώσει τὴν τρίγωνον εἰς χθόνα
 Νειλῶτιν, ἧ δὴ τὴν μακρὰν ἀποκίαν
 Ἰοῖ πέπρωται ροί τε καὶ τέκνοις κλίσαι.

patches from Major Houghton may probably disclose.— That in some of the cities of these insulated empires the knowledge and the language of ancient Egypt may still imperfectly survive, is not an unpleasing supposition: nor is it absolutely impossible that the Carthaginians, who do not appear to have perished with their cities, may have retired to the southern parts of Africa; and, though lost to the world in the vast oblivion of the Desert, may have carried with them to the new regions they occupy, some portion of those arts and sciences, and of that commercial knowledge, for which the inhabitants of Carthage were once so eminently famed.

A

LIST OF THE MEMBERS

OF THE

AFRICAN ASSOCIATION.

MAY, 1792.

A

THE Countess of Ailesbury
Rt. Hon. Henry Addington, Speaker
of the House of Commons

B

Sir Joseph Banks, Bart.
Henry Beaufoy, Esq.
Lady Belmore
Duke of Buccleugh
Earl of Buckinghamshire
Robert Barclay, Esq. (Clapham)
Mark Beaufoy, Esq.
John Beaufoy, Esq.
Richard Henry Bennet, Esq.
Isaac Hawkins Browne, Esq.
Robert Barclay, Esq. M. P.
Edward Wilbraham Bootle, Esq.
Lord Viscount Bulkeley
Earl of Bristol
Paul Benfield, Esq.
Henry Bradshaw, Esq.
Humphrey Bosville, Esq.
Robert Barclay, Esq. (Lombard-street)
William Burgh, Esq.

C

Earl Carysfort
General Conway
Sir Henry Gough Calthorpe, Bart
Sir John Call, Bart.
Thomas Coutts, Esq.
Earl Cholmondeley
Hon. Henry Cavendish
Lord Clive
John Campbell, Esq.
Doctor Cooper
Earl of Carlisle
Thomas Cornewell, Esq.
The University of Cambridge

D

Lady Ducie
Lord Daer
William Drake, Esq.
Sir John Dick, Bart.
John Drummond, Esq.

E

Earl of Exeter
Gerard Noel Edwards, Esq.

Sir James St. Clair Erskine, Bart.
The Rev. Francis Egerton

I
Thomas Johnes, Esq.

F
Sir Adam Fergusson, Bart.
Sir William Fordyce
Earl of Fife
Colonel Fullarton

K
Whitshed Keene, Esq.
Richard Payne Knight, Esq.

G
Earl of Galloway
Duke of Grafton
Earl of Gainsborough
Edward Gibbon, Esq.
The Rev. Mr. Gisborne
George Gostling, Esq.
Hon. Thomas Grenville

L
Bishop of Landaff
Lord Loughborough
Wilfred Lawson, Esq.
Dr. Lettsom
William Ludlam, Esq.

H
Countess of Harrington
Earl of Hardwicke
Lord Hawke
Mr. Professor Harwood
Sir John Hort, Bart.
John Hunter, Esq.
Henry Hoare, Esq.
Charles Hoare, Esq.
Henry Hugh Hoare, Esq.
Earl of Harrington
Sir Charles Grave Hudson, Bart.
Jacob Hagen, Esq.
Samuel Hoare, jun. Esq.
John Heaviside, Esq.
Joseph Hardcastle, Esq.

M
Earl of Moira
Lord Middleton
Sir Charles Middleton, Bart.
Sir William Musgrave, Bart.
William Marsden, Esq.
Rev. Dr. Marton
Paul Le Mesurier, Esq.
Charles Miller, Esq.
James Martin, Esq.
John Maitland, Esq.
Right Hon. Frederick Montagu
Lord Muncaster

N
Duke of Northumberland
Richard Neave, Esq.
Frederick North, Esq.
Lord North

P

William Pulteney, Esq.
 John Peachey, Esq.
 Charles Anderson Pelham, Esq.
 William Morton Pitt, Esq.
 John Park, Esq.
 Lord Viscount Palmerston
 Lord Porchester
 Samuel Parker, Esq.

R

Lord Rawdon
 Lieut. Gen. Rainsford
 Earl of Radnor
 Matthew Raper, Esq.

S

Sir John Sinclair, Bart.
 Andrew Stuart, Esq.
 Lord Sheffield
 Hugh Scott, Esq.
 John Symmons, Esq.
 William Smith, Esq.
 John Thomas Stanley, Esq.
 Sir John Stepney, Bart.
 Richard Stonehewer, Esq.
 Hans Sloane, Esq.
 Sir George Staunton, Bart.
 Philip Sansom, Esq.
 Earl Spencer
 David Scott, Esq.

T

Richard Greaves Townley, Esq.
 Henry Thornton, Esq.

V

Benjamin Vaughan, Esq.

W

Earl of Wycombe
 Sir Godfrey Webster, Bart.
 William Watson, Esq.
 Samuel Whitbread, Esq.
 William Wilberforce, Esq.
 William Winch, Esq.
 Bishop of Winchester
 Josiah Wedgwood, Esq.
 John Wilkinson, Esq.
 Earl of Warwick
 William Walcot, Esq.
 Joseph Windham, Esq.
 S. P. Wolfrestan, Esq.
 George Wolfe, Esq.

Y

Sir George Young, Bart.

HONORARY MEMBERS.

James Rennell, Esq.

Perkins Magra, his Britannic Majesty's Consul at Tunis.

Committee for managing the Affairs of the Association.

Lord Rawdon

Bishop of Landaff

Sir Joseph Banks

Mr. Beaufoy

Mr. Stuart.



